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# THE KEY STRATEGIC REQUIREMENT: FLEXIBILITY

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CONGRESS' Joint Committee on Atomic Energy contends that "the specter of a Soviet first-strike capability with a reserve [re]-strike capability may soon be at hand." In its recently issued annual report, the committee, headed by Sen. John O. Pastore (D-R. I.) and Rep. Melvin Price (D-Ill.), warned that continuation of the present massive R&D effort by the Soviets will gain them qualitative superiority, in addition to "existing quantitative and throw-weight superiority" and thus will "raise serious questions about the present strategic balance."

The defense leader principally concerned with the hardware side of the US strategic deterrent agrees that "all the statistical information available to us indicates that the Soviet effort in the strategic arena—especially in the development of strategic systems—exceeds our own." But Deputy Defense Secretary William P. Clements, Jr., told AIR FORCE Magazine that the extent of their lead is not precisely known to US analysts: "Because of the lack of information coming out of the Soviet Union, our assessments are not nearly as definitive as we would like them to be. I am inclined to call our assessments 'guess-estimates,' which don't warrant high confidence, especially so far as some of the numbers go. At the same time, I am willing to agree that however the Soviet R&D effort in the strategic arena is measured against our own, and expressed in current dollars, the Soviets lead by a significant margin."

In Secretary Clements' view, there are countervailing factors: "It is equally clear that there is a qualitative technology gap that is in our favor. I am confident that given the present level of expenditures in the strategic R&D area, we will not lose this qualitative lead. Possibly the gap will narrow somewhat between now and the year 2000, but we can maintain a lead of some kind if we continue to invest in our strategic capabilities at the present level in constant dollars. But if the Congress fails to maintain these expenditures, we could well become vulnerable and be overtaken—in a technical sense—by the Soviet

Secretary Clements views the recent decision by the Senate not to adopt the Conference Committee Report on the Defense Authorization Bill as a most ominous congressional problem: "This turn of events is very disturbing. Are we going to have to depend on another committee [other than Armed Services] for overview rights regarding our authorizations? If so, things could get very difficult for the entire executive branch, from the White House to OMB and DoD, to say nothing about the Senate and the House. What committee, if any, will have basic responsibility? I can well see why some people in the Senate are having second thoughts about the whole matter."

## Arms Control Impact Statements

Secretary Clements is chary also of another congressional proposal that could have serious effect on proposed military R&D by requiring that virtually all research projects be subject to arms-control impact statements by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), certifying that no deleterious effects on arms control negotiations or proposals are likely to result from their implementation. All DoD R&D projects that can be envisioned to have a total life-cycle cost of \$250 million or more—if fully developed and deployed—would be affected and, in effect, subject to a veto by ACDA.

Secretary Clements expressed the hope that "the Congress will not give final approval to the measure. It passed the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees, but I believe that a close look at the bill will convince the Senate that the bill would just be a brake, or veto, on necessary weapons projects and yet would not further the arms-control objectives we share with the Congress. We do consider arms control very carefully under existing laws and directives. If Congress feels it needs more information on a particular system, there are many ways to provide that. Better communications with the Con-

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